

REMARKS

By the present amendment, the independent claim 27 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of previous claim 30, including intervening claim 29, and claims 29 and 30 are cancelled. All of the remaining claims 27, 28 and 31-46 are revised so as to improve their form.

Appearing now to the issues raised in the Official Action, on page 2 of the Official Action reproduces numerous purported requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.98 as purportedly justifying the failure to consider the Information Disclosure Statement that accompanied the application when filed.

However, as is apparent from the International Search Report and the IDS itself, the Search Report cited only a single U.S. Patent, namely, U.S. Patent No. 3,427,662, such that most of the listed requirements of Rule 98 set forth on page 2 of the Official Action are inapplicable.

Furthermore, the Information Disclosure Statement indicates that it was accompanied not only a copy of the search report (which itself separately lists the single U.S. Patent in question), but also by a Form 1449 presenting the single citation in the bibliographic format preferred by the Patent Office. The text of the Official Action on page 2 suggest that the Form 1449 submitted with the previously-filed IDS might have been misplaced within the U.S.P.T.O.; therefore Applicant provides with the present response a replacement Form 1449 for the Examiner's

convenience. However, as the IDS indicates that a Form 1449 was previously filed, the date of submission of the IDS must remain as previously indicated.

Turning now to the issues regarding the claims as originally filed, the Examiner will appreciate that claims 27, 28 and 31-46 have been revised to improve their form, in a manner that addresses not only the objections raised at the of page 3 of the Official Action, but which also overcomes the rejection of the claims as filed for indefiniteness, on the basis set forth at pages 3-4 of the Official Action.

It is therefore believed to be evident that the rejection of the claims 27-46 as previously in the case, under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112, for indefiniteness, has been overcome and should not be applied to any of claims 27, 28 and 31-46 as they now appear in the case.

Beginning at page 4 of the Official Action, and continuing to page 8, claims 27-46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by FLANDERS (U.S. Patent No. 3,981,409. That rejection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

As noted above, the independent claim 27 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 30, including the intervening claim 29. Additionally, the Examiner will note that the claims as amended no longer include the term "means" in the recitation in various claim elements, as the Applicant does

not intend for the claims to be construed in accordance with the sixth paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112.

The Official Action contends that FLANDERS discloses fluid seals corresponding to those of the present claims, and identifies element 26 of FLANDERS as a fluid seal upon which the claims purportedly read.

However, element 26 of FLANDERS is simply a gasket pressed between the flat radial flanges 22, 24 of the barrel halves 12, 14.

By contrast, previous claim 30 specified that the claimed fluid seals are received within at least partially hollow arms of cross-shaped bodies positioned in regions in which several coupled elements converge. See, for example, the illustration provided in present Fig. 10, in which the cross-shaped connector 46 contains 4 fluid seals 43 in its hollow arms 48, which connector 46 is positioned at the convergence of 4 container elements 1.

The Official Action purports to address the subject matter of claim 30 on page 5 there, but merely asserts that the flat radial flanges 22, 24 of the FLANDERS barrel halves meet the language of that claim.

However, plainly, flat radial flanges are neither partly hollow nor cross-shaped, such that FLANDERS cannot be said to disclose anything responding to the language of previous claim 30, or to claim 27 as amended herewith.

The remaining dependent claims 28 and 31-46 recite a variety of features of independent patentable novelty relative to the applied prior art; however, as each of those dependent claims is furthermore patentable relative to the applied prior art at least by virtue of its dependency from an allowable independent claim 27, those claims need not be addressed individually at this time.

Consequently, claims 27, 28 and 31-46 are novel relatives to FLANDERS, as well as unobvious in view of FLANDERS.

In view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance, with claims 27, 28 and 31-46, as amended. Allowance and passage to issue on that basis are accordingly respectfully requested.

Should there be any matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future submissions, to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON

/Andrew J. Patch/

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Andrew J. Patch, Reg. No. 32,925  
Customer No. 00466  
209 Madison Street, Suite 500  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Telephone (703) 521-2297  
Telefax (703) 685-0573  
(703) 979-4709

AJP/jr